

Town of Barre
Planning Commission
November 16, 2022

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, November 16, 2022 beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road, Websterville, VT.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person: Cedric Sanborn, Chris Violette, George Clain, Terry Reil, Byron Atwood, and Mike Gilbar

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Craig Chase

STAFF PRESENT:

In person: Chris Violette

Remote: Cindy Spaulding

OTHERS PRESENT

Remote: Richard Amore and Amy Tomasso (Agency of Commerce & Community Development) and Clare Rock (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission)

A) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Mr. Sanborn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked whether there were any changes to the agenda. Mr. Violette asked to add under New Business: Conservation and Development; land use; housing; municipal zoning bill proposed in legislature by Representative Bogartz of Manchester; and under Follow-up: Lowery Road Solar. Mr. Gilbar requested to move 2023 Consolidated Renewable Energy Standard up to Old Business. Due to an oversight in approving the minutes in accordance with the published agenda, they were approved later in the meeting.

On motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Gilbar, the Planning Commission approved changes to the agenda. Vote 6-0-0.

B) NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT (if necessary limited at chair's discretion)

Mr. Sanborn asked whether there were any non-agenda comments – there were none.

C) OLD BUSINESS

- 1) Receive Richard Amore from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and Clare Rock from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to discuss the process of creating village center designations.

Mr. Violette introduced guest speakers: Richard Amore of the Agency of Commerce Community Development and Clare Rock of Central Vermont Planning Commission.

Mr. Amore provided an overview of the Village Center Designation Program which provides tools, training, grants and incentives for municipalities to plan and implement projects that support thriving communities. A “village center” means the core of historic traditional settlement, typically comprised of mix of residential, civic, religious, commercial and mix use buildings arranged along streets that are within walking distance for residents. He provided examples of village centers around the state and areas not considered for the program.

Highlights of presentation:

- Downtown & Village Center Tax Credits: 10% Historical tax credits for interior or exterior (eligible work interior and exterior improvement, code compliance, plumbing and electrical); 25% Historic Tax credits for facade up to \$25,000; 50% Code Improvements up to \$50,000 for sprinkler systems, \$75,000 for elevators and \$12,000 for lifts. (eligible work ADA modifications, electrical, fire safety or plumbing)
- Designated Village Centers get priority consideration for various ACCD, VTrans and ANR grants and incentives including, ACCD's Municipal Planning Grants, State Historic Preservation grants, Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grants, VTrans Bike/Ped and Transportation Alternatives grants, Northern Border Regional Commission Grants, ANR Water and Wastewater subsidies and loans, and various other state grants and resources.
- Communities may also designate Neighborhood Development Areas within 1/4 mile from the designated village center. Qualified projects are: exempt from Act 250 regulations for Priority Housing Projects and projects not qualifying for the exemption receive a 50% discount on application fees, exemption from the land gains tax for housing units sold, eligible for reduced state permit fees.
- Application Process: Cover letter to include a brief narrative of why seeking designation and list of revitalization activities, Authorization from the Selectboard (minutes or a resolution), notification to CVRPC and CVEDC, Town Plan conforms to State goals and Regional Plan, maps of zoning and historic districts with boundaries. Deadlines for application review and downtown board meetings.
- Potential Village Designations for Barre Town: East Barre, Upper & Lower Websterville, Upper & Lower Graniteville and South Barre

Q&A

Clain: Are there incentives for energy efficiency?

Amore: Energy efficiency incentives are through Efficiency Vermont program.

Atwood: How are the designation applications approved?

Amore: Each application is reviewed and scored for the Downtown Board to consider.

Violette: Would the proposed historic villages be designated separately or combined? Some of our villages have an upper and lower geographic part.

Amore: They would be considered separate during the application process.

Clain: Do recommendations of village centers come from the Regional Planning Commission?

Amore: The Regional Planning Commission needs to be notified and confirm that the Town Plan conforms to the Regional Plan. There is no approval from the RPC.

Clain: Does the regional planning commission provide support to the town for its application?

Rock: The RPC does provide maps and support and is a resource to complete applications.

Gilbar: Is the map work and technical support part of the town's dues?

Rock: Yes, it is part of the town's dues, there is no charge for the maps or technical support.

Mr. Amore and Ms. Tomasso left the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

- 2) Update regarding the proposed solar facility off School Road.

Mr. Violette informed members that Norwich Solar's proposed solar facility off of School Road will not be moving forward as it lost the option to extend its purchase and sales contract. There was a lot of public input by the neighbors not to have the solar facility in the area. Discussion ensued regarding using prime agriculture land for solar projects; greenhouse gasses, potential credit for forests to be credited towards the energy plan,

D) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 19, 2022

On motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Gilbar the Planning Commission approved the minutes of October 19, 2022 as amended. Vote 6-0-0.

November 1, 2022 (special)

On motion by Mr. Clain, seconded by Mr. Reil, the Planning Commission approved the minutes of November 1, 2022 (Special) as written. Vote 6-0-0.

E) NEW BUSINESS

- 1) Discuss draft of the 2023 Consolidated Renewable Energy Standard published by the Vermont Department of Public Service and consider whether to offer written comments.

Discussion ensued amongst members highlighting comments from Michael Gilbar.

General Information on Renewable Energy Standards:

Tier I

Tier I requires that Vermont DUs procure a defined percentage of their retail electric sales from any source of renewable energy. Under Tier I, this defined percentage starts at 55% in 2017, the first year the RES is in effect, and increases by 4% every three years, eventually reaching 75% in 2032.

Tier II

Tier II requires that Vermont DUs procure a defined percentage of their retail electric sales from new distributed renewable generation. For purposes of the RES, distributed renewable generation is defined as electric generation facilities that have a plant capacity of 5 MW or less and are directly connected to a DUs sub transmission or distribution system, or have been identified in an approved plan to defer transmission upgrades, or [net-metering systems](#), provided the DU owns the environmental attributes associated with the system. In order to qualify as new under the RES, facilities must have commenced operation after June 30, 2015. DUs are required to procure 1% of their annual retail sales from Tier II-eligible facilities starting in 2017, increasing by three-fifths of a percent each year until reaching 10%

in 2032.

Tier III

Tier III requires that DUs either procure additional new distributed renewable energy consistent with the requirements of Tier II, above, or acquire fossil-fuel savings through energy transformation projects. Energy transformation projects are those that reduce the fossil-fuel consumption of a DU's customers and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with that consumption. Under Tier III, DUs must procure either the amount of distributed renewable energy or fossil-fuel savings equivalent to 2% of their annual retail sales in 2017, increasing by two-thirds of a percent each year until reaching 12% in 2032.

Comments:

- 1) Need to factor in costs to utilities and consumers of increased demand on the grid. Probably should be part of the inflation factor.
- 2) How are you factoring in the reduction in sequestration of carbon due to the loss of agricultural lands to solar farms?
- 3) Full transparency on how much the RES compliance costs will impact taxpayers, assuming the rate impact shown in slide 20 is for ACP. Looks like model includes it in the summary.
- 4) Will utilities require upgrades to infrastructure to meet higher demand and if so, is that factored in?
- 5) In the forecast tables in the Current Run and Summary tab there is a total line for "societal perspective." Need to clarify what that is and why it doesn't show any numbers. Is it supposed to be the rate impact? If it is, you should clarify that.
- 6) In same tables there is a line for the "social cost of carbon." Is that from the CAP estimates? If so it should be labelled as such as should any numbers in the workbook that came from the CAP and the CAC.
- 7) With regard to the CAC data, given that the CAP numbers seem to be high compared to your baseline (slide 10), how do we know the benchmarks are reasonable or remotely accurate? And will the PUC address what may appear to be unreasonable estimates as the project unfolds? Will they protect the ratepayers from miscalculations that led to misguided legislation?

On motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Atwood, the Planning Commission approved Mr. Gilbar's comments as response to the Vermont Department of Public Services' draft 2023 Consolidated Renewable Energy Standards. Vote 6-0-0.

- 2) Proposed Bill in Legislature by Representative Bogartz of Manchester

Mr. Violette provided a bill proposed to be introduced into legislature by Representative Bongartz of Manchester: Conservation and Development; land use; housing; municipal zoning.

Members reviewed the proposed amendments to 24 VSA Chapter 117, §4412-4414, 4303, 4471, & 4464(b), and VLCT's response.

Excerpt of proposed amendment:

- shall not require more than one parking space per dwelling
- Multiple units (five) per acre

- Prohibit minimum lot size 1/5 of acre
- Restricting height of multi-unit and mix use units
- Setback dimensions for multi-units
- Emergency shelters

Discussion ensued amongst members that the proposed amendments to 24 VSA Chapter 117 will restrict local control of municipalities. Consensus is to invite the town’s representatives of the house and senate to the December and January meetings to discuss this further.

F) FOLLOW-UP

1) Update on Lowery Road Solar

Mr. Violette announced the Lowery Road Solar has decided to eliminate overhead wires and put the generated electricity from the solar facility underground across the field and forest to town’s right of way on Lowery Road.

Discussion ensued concerning the impact to the town’s right of way, having power underground conforms with the Town Plan.

G) ROUND TABLE - NONE

H) ADJOURN

On motion by Mr. Reil, seconded by Mr. Atwood, the Planning Commission voted to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Vote 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Spaulding, Clerk

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

Mike Gilbar

George Clain

Byron Atwood

Chris Violette

Craig Chase

Terry Reil